

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for preparing at least one polyisocyanate comprising reacting organic amines with phosgene in an inert solvent, wherein the reaction is carried out in at least three stages, with the first stage being carried out in a mixing apparatus, the second stage in at least one residence apparatus and the third stage in at least one reaction column and the pressure in each successive stage being lower than that in the previous stage wherein in said third stage, a carbamoyl chloride is dissociated into isocyanate and hydrogen chloride.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the at least one polyisocyanate is diphenylmethane diisocyanate (MDI), polyphenylene-polymethylene polyisocyanate (PMDI), tolylene diisocyanate (TDI), hexamethylene diisocyanate (HDI), isophorone diisocyanate (IPDI), or a mixture of diphenylmethane diisocyanate (MDI) and polyphenylene-polymethylene polyisocyanate (PMDI).

Claim 3 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein a nozzle is used as the mixing apparatus for the first stage.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein a tube reactor, a stirred vessel, an unstirred residence apparatus or a phase separation apparatus for gas and liquid phases is used as the at least one residence apparatus for the second stage.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the residence time in the residence apparatus of the second stage is from 1 second to 30 minutes.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the at least one residence apparatus of the second stage comprises at least two reactors of the same or different types which are connected in parallel, in series, or in a combination thereof.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the phosgene is separated off in the at least one reaction column of the third stage.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure is reduced from the pressure of the mixing apparatus of the first stage to the pressure of the residence apparatus of the second stage by a regulating device.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure is reduced from the pressure of the at least one residence apparatus of the second stage to the pressure of the at least one reaction column of the third stage by a regulating device.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the mixing apparatus of the first stage is integrated into the at least one residence apparatus of the second stage.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure upstream of the mixing apparatus is 3-70 bar.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the temperature in the first, second and third stages is in each case 80 -190 °C.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein an aromatic hydrocarbon, a chlorinated aromatic hydrocarbon, or a mixture thereof is used as the inert solvent.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the residence time in the at least one residence apparatus of the second stage is from 30 seconds to 10 minutes.

Claim 15 (currently amended): The process of claim 1, wherein the residence time in the at least one residence ~~residence~~ apparatus of the second stage is from 2 to 7 minutes.

Claim 16 (previously presented): The process of claim 8, wherein the regulating device is a regulating valve.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The process of claim 9, wherein the regulating device is a regulating valve.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure upstream of the mixing apparatus is 15-45 bar.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure in the reactor of the second stage is 2.5-35 bar.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the temperature in the first, second and third stages is in each case 90-150 °C.